



## Tips for Teaching Equity Lesson Plans

- **ESTABLISH GROUND RULES and TEACH STUDENTS THE SKILLS NEEDED TO DISCUSS CONTROVERSIAL AND SENSITIVE TOPICS.** Set ground rules early on. Focus on teaching mutual respect, listening, agreeing to disagree, that sincere apologies are acceptable and encouraged, anger management, forgiveness, etc....
- **SAFETY.** Create a safe classroom atmosphere, where students feel comfortable to discuss controversial topics and experience their feelings. Talk with students about the importance of confidentiality. Icebreaker exercises can be used with new groups.
- **EXPECT TENSION AND CONFLICT.** Acknowledge to students that tension and conflict will happen — discussions on stereotypes and prejudice elicit strong emotions. Conflict does not have to be negative — it is how we learn, change and improve.
- **FACILITATOR SELF-EVALUATION AND DISCLOSURE.** Periodically assess your own attitudes regarding stereotypes and prejudice — recognizing both the limits and opportunities for change. Sharing personal examples of stereotypical thinking/actions and one's ability to change, with students, can be effective role modeling. Find your own level of comfort with self-disclosure or provide examples using hypothetical situations.
- **ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION FROM ALL.** Use your classroom as a learning lab to promote fairness, inclusion and recognition of different learning styles. Cooperative learning groups require that all students be given a role and/or time to speak. Monitor student participation by assigning a certain number of chips (one chip per comment) to students — encouraging the shy student to speak; while helping the talkative student to listen. Assign someone (who is comfortable and able) the role of monitoring and facilitating student participation in groups and in the larger class. Eventually ask students to self-monitor.
- **DO NOT EXPECT A STUDENT FROM A PARTICULAR GROUP TO BE THE MAIN SPOKESPERSON FOR THAT GROUP.** This may make a student uncomfortable and convey to other students that they need not be responsible for learning about diversity.
- **TIME OUTS.** If the discussion is getting out of hand or students have extreme opposing opinions, call a time out for reflection — using writing/drawing as a way for students to express their feelings and analyze the situation. Ask that students continue thinking about the topic and NOT avoid the possible tension/anger by moving on to something unrelated.
- **CLOSURE (Ending the lesson).** When students are discussing sensitive topics, it is important that they leave with some sense of resolve and/or knowing that the topic will be continued the following day. Assign homework to help students express their views/feelings or arrive at a conclusion. Make the time to summarize the lesson — what did they learn? What questions do they still have? What are the main points of disagreement/agreement between class members? What concerns/topics need further attention?